just by saying: We want to offer a reform amendment, and we will so unlock the box.

I am puzzled by the admonitions of our colleagues. I am sorry the Senator from Wyoming is no longer on the floor, because I really hope we can set the RECORD clear. Democrats want to vote on a lockbox. But we want that lockbox to mean something. We want it to include Medicare, and we want the right to offer amendments to do just that.

That is what this debate is about. There is a difference on a cloture vote between ending a filibuster and denying Senators the right to offer amendments.

We will continue to fight for our rights, regardless of the issue and regardless of how much concern it may bring to some of those on the other side who seem to be determined to lock us out.

I know the distinguished Senator from West Virginia is here. He is anxious to begin the debate on a very important bill.

I am hopeful we can pass this legislation today.

I yield the floor.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

KOSOVO AND SOUTHWEST ASIA EMERGENCY SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 1999.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will now resume consideration of H.R. 1664, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 1664) making emergency supplemental appropriations for military operations, refugee relief, and humanitarian assistance relating to the conflict in Kosovo, and for military operations in Southwest Asia for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1999, and for other purposes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, this measure is not at the moment covered by any time agreement, is it?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is correct.

Mr. BYRD. I thank the Chair.

Mr. President, this is an appropriations bill. I believe Mr. STEVENS at some point in the afternoon will be on the floor to manage the bill. Mr. DOMENICI, who is very deeply involved in this bill as well, and who is on the Appropriations Committee, will be on the floor and will, as between himself and Mr. STEVENS, manage the bill. I am not managing the bill, but until one of those Senators comes to the floor, I have a few things I can say about it.

First, I thank the majority leader for making it possible for us to take up this bill at this time. I also thank the minority leader for his cooperation in that regard.

I thank the majority leader for keeping his word with respect to calling up this matter. I will have possibly a little more to say about that later, so I will explain what I mean in having said that.

I thank Mr. STEVENS, who was chairman of the Senate side of the conference, which occurred on the emergency supplemental appropriations bill a few weeks ago. I thank the House chairman of the conference, Mr. BILL YOUNG of Florida, for his many courtesies that were extended upon that occasion, and for his fairness in conducting the conference, and for his cooperation in helping to work out a way in which we could at that point let the emergency supplemental appropriations conference report be on its way and be sent back to the House and Senate for the final consideration of both of those Houses. I thank him for his efforts in bringing about an agreement whereby that emergency supplemental appropriations bill was let loose—if I may use that term—from the chains which at the moment had it locked in an impasse in conference.

The provision in this bill, which is before the Senate, and in which I am very interested, is what we refer to as the ''steel loan guarantee provision.'' There is a similar provision which Mr. DOMENICI was able to include in the bill, and it is similar to the steel loan guarantee except that it has to do with oil and gas. It provides a loan guarantee program for the oil and gas industry. He will more carefully and thoroughly explain that part of the bill later on.

Both of these provisions had been included in the emergency supplemental appropriations bill. Both of these provisions were in the emergency supplemental appropriations bill when it passed the Senate. Senators had an opportunity, when the emergency supplemental appropriations bill was before the Senate, to offer amendments to the steel loan guarantee language and to the oil and gasoline guarantee language. Senators had that opportunity.

No amendments were offered to those provisions when that bill was before the Senate. Those provisions were put into that bill when that appropriations bill, the emergency supplemental appropriations bill, was marked up in the Senate Appropriations Committee. Therefore, those provisions, as I have already said, were included in the bill when it reached the floor, when it came before the Senate. The Senate passed the bill. No amendments were offered to those provisions at that time.

That bill went to conference with the House in due course. It was a period of several weeks before the House-Senate conference took place on that bill. When the conference did occur, these two provisions—the steel loan guarantee provision and the oil and gasoline guarantee provision—were gradually put off until the very end of the conference.

The conference on that bill lasted for several hours over a period of 3 or 4 days. But it was the wish of both Chairman YOUNG and the chairman of the Senate conferees, Chairman STEVENS, to delay consideration of those two parts of the bill until other matters in the bill, other differences between the two Houses, had been resolved. As a consequence, as I say, it was toward the very end that we finally got around to those two provisions, the loan guarantee provisions.

In the conference, a vote occurred on the steel loan guarantee provision late one evening. I think the vote really occurred after midnight, so it was 12:30 or 1 o'clock in the morning of the next day that we finally voted on the steel loan guarantee provision, which had been written in the Senate Appropriations Committee, which had come before the Senate, which had been adopted by the Senate.

When that vote occurred, all of the Democratic conferees on the House side voted to accept the steel loan guarantee provision which was in the Senate bill; three of the Republican House conferees voted to accept the steel loan guarantee provision. So by a vote, I believe, of 13–10, the conference adopted the steel loan guarantee provision.

The next day when the conferees met, a motion was made to reconsider the vote that had occurred the previous late evening and the motion to reconsider carried. Two of the Republican House Members of the conference switched their votes from the previous position of supporting the steel loan guarantee to their new position of opposing that guarantee. As a consequence, my steel loan guarantee provision lost, I think, by a vote of 12–11. It lost by one vote.

An impasse prevailed. Senator DOMENICI's oil and gas loan guarantee provision had been rejected by the House conferees; on the second vote, the steel loan guarantee provision, which I had authored, was rejected by the House conferees. There was an impasse. The House conferees wouldn't give and the Senate conferees wouldn't give.

Therefore, rather than see the emergency supplemental appropriations bill die in conference, I suggested we have a recess and try to work out an agreement whereby we could find a way to let that emergency supplemental appropriations bill fly with its wings out of the conference, go to the President's desk. In that bill, there were appropriations for the military in Kosovo, there was a pay increase for the military, and there were various and sundry disaster relief provisions which were intended to help people in South and Central America and in the United States, as well—American farmers and so on. It was certainly not my desire to kill that bill; it was not my desire to delay.

I said: Let's have a recess, Mr. Chairmen—addressing my remarks to the two chairmen—let's have a recess and see if we can't work things out.